

Report on Successful K–12 STEM Education (Continued From the Sept. 29 OVAE Connection)

The report [*Successful K–12 STEM Education*](#) was prepared by a committee for the National Research Council. The committee found that because there is little research to suggest that any particular school or educational practice is more effective than any other, it was unable to compare the effectiveness of the three types of STEM-focused schools: (1) selective STEM schools, (2) inclusive STEM schools, and (3) schools with STEM-focused career and technical education programs. Similarly, the committee found it challenging to ascertain whether various factors caused outcomes or whether the outcomes were coincidences; ascertain the effects, if any, of school types on different student populations; or determine whether there were value-added effects of STEM-focused schools over non-STEM-focused schools.

The committee did find studies suggesting “some potentially promising—if preliminary and qualified—findings” about each school type. Those studies also “raise questions that merit further exploration about variations within and across school types.” In addition, they raise questions about whether each of these school types increases progress toward achieving the three goals STEM education is designed to accomplish. The committee said that its understanding of the schools would be “enhanced by more information about the instructional practices in these schools and the factors that influence them.”

In addition to considering STEM-focused schools, the committee looked at STEM education in comprehensive schools that “strive for excellence” for all students across the spectrum of disciplines (*i.e.*, are not STEM-focused *per se*). According to the committee, successful STEM education also occurs in these settings. The most widely recognized attempts to promote STEM education in comprehensive schools occur through the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. Research suggests that the success of these programs is related to “emphasizing deep understanding rather than comprehensive coverage, aligning these programs with the current understanding of how students learn in a discipline, drawing on current research directions... and emphasizing the development of inquiry and reasoning skills.” The AP program is redesigning its science courses to incorporate these successful strategies.

OVAE Seeks Input on a Research Center for CTE

OVAE is planning a competition for a national research center to carry out scientifically based research and evaluation, and to conduct dissemination and training activities consistent with Section 114(d)(4) of the [*Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006*](#). It seeks input on research topics and on types of dissemination activities and technical assistance to states to address the education, employment, and training needs of students in career and technical education programs. Please submit your comments to NationalResearchCent@ed.gov or at the Department of Education’s blog at <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2011/10/national-research-center-for-career-and-technical-education/> by Oct. 21, 2011.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Awards \$9 Million in Grants

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ([USCIS](#)) recently [announced](#) the award of \$9 million in grants to 42 organizations to expand citizenship preparation programs for permanent residents. The funding supports individuals on the path toward U.S. citizenship by building community capacity to provide citizenship preparation services. The awardees represent both traditional immigrant destinations and new immigration gateways across 27 states and the District of Columbia. Grant recipients plan to provide services to some 20,000 permanent residents from nearly 90 countries.

The 2011 awards were made in three categories over a two-year period. The first category funds local citizenship instruction programs to prepare permanent residents for the civics and English (reading, writing and speaking) components of the naturalization test. The second category supports citizenship instruction and naturalization application services. Recipients of these two categories of awards include public school systems, colleges, community and faith-based groups, adult education organizations, public libraries and literacy organizations. The third category increases the capacity of members or affiliates of national organizations to provide citizenship preparation services in communities. These recipients will provide technical assistance to increase the long-term capacity to provide citizenship instruction and naturalization-application services in their local communities.

English Language Learner University (ELL-U) Awarded the Education Standard of Excellence for Website Development

English Language Learner University ([ELL-U](#))—a free learning and professional development portal created for adult education practitioners of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) has been awarded the 2011 [Education Standard of Excellence](#) from the Web Marketing Association. The association’s WebAward program is the premier annual website award [competition](#), naming the best websites in 96 industries. To learn more about ELL-U, developed by OVAE, please access its [website](#). For more information on the WebAward program, please access the [Web Marketing Association](#).